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Nancy's Mother

By Jean Carter Cochran

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By

JEAN CARTER COCHRAN

Author of
"The Rainbow in the Rain,"
"Her Carcassonne" and
"The Friendly Stars"

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To Nancy's Father

"The Little Cherubs whispered,
'What strange new soul is this
Who cometh with a robe besmirched
Unto the place of Bliss?'
Then spake the Eldest Angel,
'The robe he wears is fair—
The groping fingers of the poor
Have held and blessed him there.'

"The Little Cherubs whispered,
'Who comes to be our guest
With dust upon his garment's hem
And stains upon his breast?'
Then spake the Eldest Angel,
'Most lovely is the stain—
The tears of those he comforted
Who may not weep again.'

* * * *

" 'The dust upon his garment's hem,
My lips shall bow to it;
The stains upon the breast of him
Are gems quite exquisite.
O little foolish Cherubs,
What truth is this ye miss?
There comes no saint to Paradise
Who does not come like this.' "

—*Quoted.*

CHAPTER I

Jimmie, The Soldier!

BILLY is practicing scales; he goes dum, dum, dum, until I am most crazy—I wish he wasn't such a conscienceful person,—I think that's what you call it; I want him to play with me and I suppose he will go on this way for a whole half hour.

As for Jimmy, he is no good at all since his head was hurt, and he had a patch put on it; he keeps pretending he's a soldier all day long, just because they said he was so brave. He's in the compound now, marching up and down, singing,

> "When I grow up I'm going to be
> A captain of the Infantry."

When I beg to join in, he says, "Girls can't be soldiers; they can't even vote." I'd like to know if little boys can, either,—why do boys put on such airs?"

Dear little Gwen is fast asleep and my mother is going to a feast at the Tai Tai's (official's wife). She said, "It is no place for little girls," when I begged to go. It seems too bad that all the really nice things

like candy and Chinese Feasts are bad for children,—it's not fair.

So you see there's not much for me to amuse myself with, and I just think I'll tell about the time Jimmy hurt his head. Everybody,—that is, my grandmothers, grandfather, uncles, aunts and cousins,—seemed to like it so much when I told them about being lost in the mountains. As usual, we had to come to Kuling, among the mountains of China, to spend our summer vacation. We live in Hwai Yuan in the winter, and that is where we do our missionary work—at least my father and mother do,—and we children help by being children. I must explain to you again, for perhaps you have forgotten there are four of us, Billy, Jimmy, Gwennie and Nancy, only I really come first because I am Nancy and I am the oldest. Now I must begin my story without any more explaining.

It was going to be a red-letter day in our lives. I don't know exactly what that means, but I'll put it down and ask my mother when she comes home if that's right. Our Auntie Jeanie was coming all the way from America to teach us children and she was to reach Kiu Kiang that day,—Kiu Kiang is the place you get off the river steamer to come up the mountain. My mother was wild with joy at the mere idea of some one of her own dear family coming so many, many miles, and so were we all. She was going down to meet Auntie Jeanie, 'cause we had lots of

friends living all around who could keep an eye on us children.

Well, instead of the day breaking fair and bright as it always does in make-believe stories, the rain came down "in sheets and pillow cases," as funny Auntie Polly once said. When it rains in the mountains of China it always means what it says; the little dried-up brooks become rivers of angry waters quick as a wink, and the water pours off the roof so one can hardly hear oneself think.

It takes more than rain to disturb my mother though; she just took one glance out of the window, laughed and made a funny remark and started to work.

We were up long before daylight so she could get Gwennie's milk ready, see that there was a good dinner on hand for Auntie Jeanie, and get chair coolies.

It was no joke finding four chair coolies who wanted to take that wet trip on such a day; the Chinese hate water almost as badly as chickens do. When Mother thought she had four, two would suddenly disappear and she would have to begin again. You might have thought it was the whole twelve tribes of Israel getting ready to cross the Red Sea by the noise they made, instead of one dear, sweet little Mother, with curly brown hair, almost smothered in raincoats and veils, starting for a lonely trip down the mountain. Finally she got off while we children wildly waved until she was whisked around the cor-

ner; then we settled down to play, and of course we fully meant to be as angelic as we had promised.

In about half an hour, Aunt Margaret, who had planned to go with mother, collected four coolies, and again there was scolding and scrambling among the coolies and away she went.

We children had a fine time playing some of our very nicest games, though inside we were so excited we could hardly wait, and the hands of the clock did not seem to move an inch. I really think it was the longest day of my whole life.

Late in the afternoon our Jimmy boy, who is a very adventurous (doesn't that sound grown up!) boy, climbed on the railing of the piazza when no one was looking, to catch rain drops.

Now the porch was very high, and his foot slipped and he fell and hit his head against a stone, and lay quite still and did not move or speak. It was simply awful, but one of our neighbors ran and picked him up and carried him to the house; then they sent for a doctor, who came straight off, and there was a great deal of running back and forth and all the grown people looked very sober. In a little while they took him away to the hospital, and Billy and I just felt terribly, for we did not know how much he was hurt—and if he was going to die—and our Mother away. You know when Mother's away one feels as if one couldn't be sure of

anything, and as if every place was empty. So Billy and I just clung to each other and cried; of course little Gwennie was too little to realize anything. It seemed as if the night got twice as dark as usual, and at every noise outside we would start and think they were coming; we listened so hard our ears seemed to get sharper and we could hear quite plainly sounds way up the valley.

In the meantime my mother had gotten to the river without anything worse than a dreadful wetting, but she was so happy at the thought of seeing Auntie Jeanie she never noticed that. She went down on the Bund to watch the steamer come in, and way off on the deck she recognized Auntie Jeanie waving wild signals, and everybody was so interested and excited they waved too, though of course they did not know Mother at all. Mother said she fairly wanted to pull the boat in, she was so anxious to get hold of her.

Finally the boat came in, amidst the screaming, pushing, jumping and yelling of excited Chinese coolies. My Daddy says calmness and repose is unknown to Chinese coolies unless you really want them to work, —then they fall to sleep anywhere. Mother and Auntie Jeanie came together in a series of hugs and kisses, and a few tears, though why they should cry at such a joyful occasion passes me. Aunt Margaret stood behind and waited her turn and it all began again. Every one talked at once, asking

questions and answering them without stopping. My mother told me about it afterwards; she tells things so funnily and so clearly you just feel as if you had been there; somebody said she was "a word artist," and I guess they meant she makes things so plain it is like a picture.

It took a long time, as you can imagine after all I have told you about China, to get started back up the mountains. They had to get coolies for all Aunt Jeanie's luggage, for everything is carried up on the backs of men,—yes, trunks, too, and I can just see you open your eyes at that, way off in America.

The night began to fall (doesn't that sound like a real book?) before they got more than half way, but they went right on. When they got within half an hour or so of home, a coolie stopped my mother's chair and asked if she was Er Si Mu. She said "yes" and they handed her two telegrams, one to my Daddy, who was on business in Shanghai, and one to Uncle Sam, who is a Doctor and was at home in the Mission Station. The telegram said that Jimmy was badly hurt and to come. The coolies had been told very clearly and sharply not to stop anywhere, and not to show the telegram to Er Si Mu; that is how they obeyed.

My mother knew in a minute that they never would have sent for Uncle Sam, who was ten-days' journey away, unless something dreadful had happened. If you have

ever met my mother for one minute you could see in her deep, soft, brown eyes the great love she has for us children.

I guess it was almost like a knife in her heart. She just turned to her coolies standing around her with their queer torches and she made them run—over sticks and stones and gullies they stumbled in the darkness, up and down steps. She must have been nearly shaken to bits, as one or another would slip and nearly fall, but she urged and pleaded with them to go faster, in a very shaky voice.

When she reached the house she found it dark, for we were at Aunt Margaret's, and again she turned and hurried away to the hospital.

Soon Auntie Jeanie came; how different it was from what we had planned! We just hugged and kissed her hard I can tell you, it was next best to having Mother; and to know she was with our Jimmy boy made everything look brighter and more solid, somehow. Auntie Jeanie and we just clung to each other until we fell asleep tired out with misery and gladness.

When mother arrived at the hospital, they told her Jimmy was coming out of the ether nicely, and that he must be kept from all exciting things; she flew right to him and took the nurse's place, but very quietly and calmly. When he slowly opened his eyes there was our blessed mother giving him a glass of water as if she had never been

away; that funny boy wanted to know why she had her clothes on in the middle of the night.

The first few days were the dangerous ones. You see they had taken a piece of bone right out of his head, and she staid right close beside him for three or four days without ever taking off her clothes, for fear some sudden noise or jar might startle him; when the danger was all over she looked down at her feet and saw she still had on her rubbers she had put on that happy rainy morning to go down the mountain. Now that is just like my mother. Do you suppose all mothers are like that?

CHAPTER II

My Mother's Day

WE are all very busy this morning thinking very hard, for we are trying to write compositions. Do you remember when you were little boys and girls in school; how your heart used to sink on the mornings your teacher would say in the tone she uses when she thinks she is giving you a great treat, "Now, children, we will write compositions today, and you can choose your own subjects"?

Billy is leaning away over his desk, writing away for dear life,—that boy has really too many ideas! I know he's giving a long account of how the trolleys run in San Francisco, or what kind of food cows eat in the winter and how they chew. I wonder why boys always love such stupid things?

It's always dreadfully hard for me because I think of so many different subjects and they all seem like the little blind paths in the mountains that start out so beautifully and lead to nowhere.

Oh! now I have a splendid idea, I just guess I'll tell you about one of my mother's

days, for I think she does more in one day than most people do in a week. I am going to describe last Saturday for I was with her a great deal that day.

At half-past six the scramble began. It seemed like getting up in the middle of the night, it was so cold and dark. When there are two grown-up people and four children to dress in half an hour it takes some engineering, as Daddy says. Mother often wishes people didn't have so many feet; for with five people it means ten stockings and ten shoes, and that's just a starter; when your rooms are small, things seem to get even more thoroughly lost. You know how it is a sleeping-car berth, don't you? Billy and I both felt so very happy we could not help singing a duet, something like an oratorio, Daddy called it—I don't know what that is—but I sang, "Mr. Duck went to walk with Mr. Turkey," very high, and then Billie sang, "Mr. Duck went to walk with Mr. Turkey," very low, but at the top of his lungs and all the while he was pulling on his stockings. People don't always like our singing the way I wish they would; I know once at home in America a cousin came to see us, and we children were upstairs singing; she turned to my aunt and said, "Mary, what is that awful noise?" Aunt Polly answered, "Oh, that's nothing, it's only Billy and Nancy singing, 'Jesus Loves Me,' in Chinese"; we have been teased about it ever since!

To go back to our stockings, Auntie Jeanie complained the din was dreadful, but Mother and the amah went calmly on buttoning up dresses, brushing hair, and seeing that we cleaned our teeth properly, as though it had been "The silence of the tomb." I don't know if Auntie Jeanie will let that stand, she doesn't seem to like such expressions, she says they spoil my style, whatever that may mean,—if I make her laugh she will leave it.

Through all the noise my mother was just as sweet and not one bit cross, though I know she had been awake since five with Gwennie, and up with Jimmy in the night because he had an earache.

At a little after seven we were all dressed and sitting at breakfast; Mother was pouring out her coffee—she doesn't take much else for breakfast—when the table boy came in and said, "There's a poor woman outside who wants to speak to Er Si Mu." So Mother hurried out; when she came back in about ten minutes, she did not seem to notice her coffee was cold, and drank it quickly as though her mind was away off. I saw a little tear trickling down her cheek, which she brushed quickly away with her hand. She told us this poor woman with a baby in her arms was nearly frozen and perhaps starving: this is famine year for the Chinese, because the rain spoiled their harvest. Many of the poorer people who are always hungry even in good years, are starving now.

We found afterwards my mother had given the woman one of her own padded garments. The Chinese women all love my mother dearly, I think it's because she says in her heart, "What if I was this poor, sad woman, and my little Gwennie was this poor starved little baby?" So she treats them just as she would like to be treated herself.

When she talks to them you can see the love shining out of her face; the tears in her eyes tell them she is sorry for their troubles, and of course they love her from deep down in their hearts. No one in this wide world has ever been so kind to them before.

After breakfast we had prayers and we all like that 'cause we can sing a hymn very loud indeed. Somehow I feel better after singing loud. It was Jimmy's turn to choose and he wanted, "Baa, Baa, Black Sheep," and couldn't understand why we laughed.

Then came Gwennie's bath, and that's such fun. She is too cunning for words, and laughs and crows and kicks her little pink toes. I truly believe my mother loves that bath the best of the whole day for she can take Gwennie's dear little soft body in her arms and hug and cuddle it to her heart's content. She wouldn't believe it, but she always reminds me of the picture of Baby Jesus and His Mother that hangs over them; she has the same sort of holy look on her face.

When she was in the midst of dressing Gwennie, funny old Loa Pong, the gate-keeper, came in, and making his deep bow, he handed mother a big red card and said the Tai Tai (official lady) was at the gate. Mother gave me Gwennie and hurried into her room to put on her best Chinese coat, and give "a lick and a promise to her hair." The Chinese do not like curly hair, and asked Mother once why she didn't use a comb. (Auntie Jeanie says "a lick and a promise" is not very elegant, but I can leave it if I want to.)

Then Loa Pong, the gate-keeper, in his dirty, ragged padded coat and his little moth-eaten pig tail, about as thick as my littlest finger, with very deep bows, showed the Tai Tai in, and mother, with her best Chinese manners, bowed and smiled and shook her own hands telling the Tai Tai she was doing her too much honor.

While I, with Gwennie half dressed in my arms, and the bath tub at my feet, couldn't help laughing behind her dear little back. You see we had to bathe Gwennie in the parlor because that stove makes the warmest fire. It all looked funny though, the stately bows and polite remarks and lovely coats of the ladies, and dirty, mussy Loa Pong with such fine manners and such shabby clothes, and the bath tub and everything. In America we don't expect callers at nine o'clock in the morning, but in China one never knows when the Tai Tais will come. Mother says

it's a great comfort to her to remember that the ladies don't know that as a usual thing foreigners don't take baths in their drawing-rooms.

Well, of course the ladies had to be given tea and sweet meats and smoke their little pipes; they dropped the ashes on the floor and made holes in the best rug, too. Mother explained to me afterwards that as they had no rugs on their own stone or mud floors they couldn't realize the harm they did—I think they should, though. Then they wanted to see the house because we had just moved into a new apartment in the boys' school. They went into all our bedrooms, with Mother always very patient and most polite following after, and they asked lots of foolish questions, and pulled out all the bureau drawers and wanted to wind the bedroom clock.

We thought they would never go, but at last they were satisfied that we had not used ground-up Chinese bones for tooth powder, and that we had no real skeletons in our closet as they had heard, and off they went. That is really too quick a way of telling how they left, for it took nearly half an hour for them to say their last pretty speeches and make their last good-by bows; in the end they toddled off, each one held up by an amah because their feet were so small.

By the time the sedan chairs had jogged round the corner, Mother had whisked off her good coat, seen that the amah had but-

toned Gwennie's dress in the back and not down the front, and gone to the store room to give out the food and oil for the day. The Chinese servants steal things so very dreadfully everything has to be locked up and then given out each morning. Mother has to even watch them with her own eyes fill the lamps, or they would take the kerosene. She also had to fix Gwennie's milk and then help the men who brought the wood for the winter weigh it, for fear they would not bring enough, or would steal it, or soak it in water to make it weigh more. Then the women whom she is teaching to read began to come, and she sat with them for an hour. It is pretty hard work, I guess, for they are old and stupid; English is hard enough, I think, but it is knitting work compared to ditch digging to Chinese, Daddy says. Mother never gets cross though, and she went over and over the same verse of the hymn so they could learn it, and she explained it to them in easy words, and when they got a little bit of an idea what it all meant she was so happy. All the time they had one or two babies and little children with them who cried or wanted something just when she tried to make things plain. I guess she must get cross inside, but she didn't show it to them, and they each one told her some hard trouble they were having and she comforted them so sweetly.

After she finished with the women, she decided the parlor stove pipe needed

cleaning, as the fire would not burn, and she called the table boy and they went at it together, he was too stupid to do it alone. I ran in there after my doll and there was my mother with soot on her nose, cheeks and hands doing most of the work herself, while the boy watched her.

She told me to run and get washed up because as a great treat she was going to take me over to Li Sao Tze to dinner, and she would be ready in a twinkling. She always says things in such a funny way even when she is busy, it makes one laugh.

While we were getting ready, there was a great smash in the living room, and we rushed in to find that the boy in his clumsy way had smashed the best lamp to smithereens—that word is not in the dictionary but Mother used it so it must be all right. It was mother's wedding present, and, as mother says, "It gave an air to the whole station," so she reproved the boy, as he deserved.

At last we were ready, and off we started in great glee, for Mother and I do not very often get away together, she doesn't think too much Chinese food good for me. Li Sao Tze is one of the inquirers, that means she is asking about Christianity; she is very poor and ignorant and often comes to wash windows or scrub floors. Mother didn't like very well to go, knowing how hard a life she had, but the ladies here helped her out a lot, and she was so grateful, my mother saw

it would hurt her pride if we did not accept, so she decided we must.

We walked along the dirty crooked streets so different from our blessed clean America; all the savage dogs and horrid black pigs seemed to be out for an airing, too, and were nosing around most uncomfortably.

As we passed along a woman here and there would say how do you do to mother, and ask her where she was going, which is very polite in China. Soon the crowd began to follow us, for they are not very well used to seeing us foreigners on that side of town. At last we came to Li Sao Tze's little hut. I can't very well tell you how poor it was, 'cause I never saw anything quite like it at home. It was built of straw and was just about as high as a man. It was spotlessly clean, for she had scrubbed it well, and the only furniture was the table and stools we sat on; and the bedding rolled up in a corner. The cooking was done at her neighbor's. When the three of us and a neighbor were in the room it was full. There was a crowd of twenty curious people crowded around the door staring hard at us, and as there was no window, the air was very bad. My Mother began to talk to the crowd at once about "the way," for she never misses a chance to tell those miserable, helpless people about some one who loves them, and will care for them; they listened for awhile and then quietly went away. A crowd is always exciting in China for one never

knows whether they will stay good natured or begin to throw stones, and little girls like me get a little scared sometimes, but people all seem to like and understand my mother so well I am not afraid with her. Well, as you can see, it was a pretty poor place, but as mother said, "Li Sao Tze's manners would have graced a duchess." She served us as though it was the finest Yamen feast instead of the coarse rice and vegetables she could buy, and we had just a happy time. I simply love to eat with chop sticks, and talk Chinese, and I was very sorry when Mother said we must leave. Li Sao Tze walked a little way with us begging us to come again, and she looked at my mother as if she was her only friend, just the way a loving dog looks at his master.

We had come to our own street when a woman Mother knew came up to Mother and said, "Oh, Er Si Mu, there is a poor little baby out on the mountain, the people put it there yesterday, and it has been crying all night." Just think of that in the middle of winter; I couldn't help thinking what if it had been Gwennie?

Mother told me to go home, as we were so near, and off she started, almost running. The woman went with her and there, out beside a big rock on the mountain, she found the littlest kind of a baby. She had just one dirty garment wrapped around her, and she was, oh, so dirty and thin, and blue with the cold. Mother did not wait a minute but

snatched her up in her arms and hugged her close to make her warm. Two or three women followed her, and they were surprised to see her so tender to a little strange baby; they kept whispering, "By the way she treats it, it might be her own."

I was standing by the door when she came in, and heard her ask the amah to bring a hot bath and the table boy to build a great fire. She would not let us children in the room until she had bathed the baby and burned the old garment, for fear we might catch something. We peeked in the door, though, and as she washed the poor little shivering thing, the tears ran down her face, and she kept saying, "Oh, you poor little baby, you poor little baby!" Mother spent all the rest of the afternoon trying to bring the frozen baby back to life, and by supper time I could see she was dreadfully tired. We all felt pretty solemn over our tea, for we were so sorry for the baby whose father and mother did not want her. Mother put us to bed early and talked to us so sweetly about the baby and how kind we must be to her.

She was so tired at station meeting that evening she fell right asleep in a talk about some old salary or other; they all laughed about it the next morning, but I don't wonder she did, do you?

Late that night—after she had seen her own little children were all right, she went to the little motherless baby, making it warm

and "comfy" and cuddled it, because it never had been cuddled before.

The baby died yesterday and we children cried very hard, it all seemed so sad, and we wanted her as a playmate. I think it is a very beautiful thing to have a mother who is a mother to all little forlorn babies, because she loves her own babies so dearly.

CHAPTER III

The Village on the Willow Pattern Plate

MY mother has been away from us children three whole days and it has seemed very funny and, of course, a little exciting. She is back now though, and how we did kiss and hug her; we just jumped up and down for sheer joy and we talked so fast we couldn't hear ourselves think. Very soon mother had to say, "All good children should be in bed," but it was a pretty long time before we cuddled down and she blew out the candle; with several last kisses all around.

The next day I heard her tell the grown people all about her trip, so I am going to tell you as nearly as I can remember; it won't be as good, for mother tells things better than any one else in the world.

In the first place,—not, once upon a time, —now is Chinese New Year. In China that means Christmas, birthdays, New Year's, Decoration Day and Fourth of July all rolled into one. Sometimes they cele-

brate for nearly three weeks; the missionaries get a little bit tired of it, for all regular work has to stop; but, as mother remarked, "Nothing can dampen the Chinaman's ardor; he even wears his mourning with a difference."

This year, as usual, every one was very much excited, exactly the way we children were on Christmas Eve. I could hear the beggars not sneaking along as they generally do with their whining voices asking for cash; but instead, they stood quite boldly at the door, chanting out clearly a poem like this—my mother wrote it in English for us,—

One voice sings—"May pearls enter your front gate,"
And a deeper voice responds, "Good."
First voice—"May rubies enter the back gate."
Second voice—"Good."
First voice—"May rubies and pearls enter your gates,—"
"Good."
"It is well asked."
"Good."
"It will be well accomplished."
"Good."
"If you give twenty biscuits you will still have more."
"Good."

"At one place they sent them away and they quickly changed their tone—

"May a coffin enter your front gate."
"Good."
"May nothing but hay enter your back gate."
"Good."
"May only coffins and hay enter your back gates."
"Good."

Then they went away, saying dreadful things we children couldn't understand. My mother said she was glad she could not.

The next morning we were eating breakfast when the callers began to come. They were the servants looking very strange and uncomfortable, all dressed up in their best. I should like to say "glad rags," though I suppose a little girl writing a story should be careful. The table boy's clothes really were that, for he was a famine-sufferer and Daddy took him in, "to save his family, not as a table ornament," as he laughingly told some one who spoke about his rough manners and untidy ways. The servants came to thank Daddy and Mother for their "overwhelmingly generous" New Year's gift—that's the Chinese way of saying thank you. They had each received twenty-five cents!

Soon the teachers came in silks and they were just terribly polite, with their deep bows, and so stiff about drinking the tea; being careful to do it exactly as their fathers and grandfathers did unto the third and fourth generation, as we learned in the com-

mandments; only their tea drinking goes back thousands of years—I can hardly imagine such a thing.

After them came the school girls, that was more fun for us children, though they had on their company manners, too; however, I succeeded in making my best friend giggle nervously. They were almost as gay as Uncle Bois's flower garden, with their new coats and gay hats and butterfly shoes. They had hardly gone before the women of the church came shyly in. The rich ladies don't call for six days. Billy whispered to me, "They don't do a thing to sweetmeats, do they?" Poor old hungry things, they ate all they could, and more than you or I possibly could, and then put the rest in handkerchiefs, which they brought in order to carry home what they didn't eat. It took them a good while to say good-by, these women always cling to my mother as though they did not want to leave their best friend.

In the afternoon we all went over to the girls' school, even busy Mother, and played games. It is such fun to teach the girls our nice American games! They love them and are very bright about learning hide-and-seek, tag, hunt the thimble and others. You would be surprised to hear how they laugh and how quickly those with bound feet can get over the ground.

All that day Father and Mother were planning her trip to the country. It had taken

weeks of coaxing from Daddy to get her to consent to leave us children for three whole days, and I hardly believe they would ever have gotten her off but her love for the Chinese women drew her. The village is just one of those country places Father visits on his trips, but only one foreign lady had ever been there. A good many of the men believe in "the doctrine," but the wives don't like it and treat their Christian husbands badly.

I suppose you wonder why my mother hated to leave us for three little days. In the first place, Auntie Jeanie was not with us, and I think you will understand when I explain the other reason. I have never written anything about my little brother Harry, who went to be with Jesus when I was a tiny baby—Mother tells us about his wee darling ways, and how he was always so good and gentle that everybody loved him. He was just learning to talk and had such pretty curly hair, like Mother's, and a sweet smile with dimples. I think that when he left us something in my Mother's heart died too, and that she has never been quite as happy since; when she talks of him there is such a longing look in her eyes. She told me once she never knew how our Father in Heaven loves his children, until she found how deep down into her whole heart, like the clinging roots of a flower, her love for Harry went. Harry was so brave and patient when he was ill, doing exactly as he was told, and my

mother used to pray that she would take the trouble from her loving Father, as patiently as Harry took the medicine and treatment from his parents' hands. Chinese names have some beautiful meanings; Hwai Yuan, where we live, means, "the place that those who are far away love," and An Hui, our Province, means, "comfort." I always love to think that when Harry left us, Mother held me up in her arms and said, "This is my little An Hui." Whenever Mother leaves us I am sure she thinks of Harry and how something might happen to us while she is away, for in China many dreadful things can happen very quickly.

It seems to me it has taken me almost forever to begin to tell about their trip, but now I am really off. On that eventful day —how well that sounds—the chairmen turned up bright and early. In China if we expect the coolies early, they come late; if you expect them late, they come early! I think it makes life more exciting not to have things go as they should.

The party was made up mostly of ladies; there was Aunt Agnes—she's a doctor; Aunt Margaret—she's a nurse; Ren Ku Niang—she's a Chinese teacher; and my mother—she's just a mother; all in sedan chairs.

Sometimes you must wonder how I have so many aunts and uncles here in China, but most of them are just make-believe, because our real aunts and uncles are so far away—Uncle Sam, Aunt Margaret and Auntie

Jeanie are the only really truly uncle and aunts.

The chairmen started off with the usual grunt and grumble walking along over the deep snow which lay all over the ground. It was pretty cold as they crept along through the country, and they passed lots of little villages with their thatched roofs and groves of willows exactly like the picture on the willow pattern plate.

The coolies would stop at each of these villages to rest and drink bowls of hot tea, and the people, all dressed in their best for New Years, would crowd around the chairs and make funny remarks about the strange foreigners. For some peculiar reason, perhaps because she wore glasses, they always thought my mother was very old. You know, really, my mother looks very young. "This is the old one," they would say, "she must be eighty or ninety years old," and one woman told her she knew Daddy, he had ridden through there on his bicycle once, and his disposition was very lively. She asked if my mother was his mother. It may be because that is the biggest compliment a Chinese can give, to think one very old. At noon Uncle Ed came on his mule to meet them. A mule is not a romantic animal to put in my story; he is no prancing steed of chivalry, such as my fairy books tell us about; poor old Billy Bryan, no one would ever think of calling him that! Uncle Ed did not ride up to their rescue with spear in

rest; but my mother was just as glad to see him as though he had; for you see she could hand over the management of the quarreling Chinese coolies to him, and that was a great relief.

The snow had turned to slush and mud. Three or four of the men had forgotten to bring extra straw sandals. The mud caked in the old ones, and they grumbled and slipped and said they would not carry them another step without more shoes, and of course way out in the country was no place to buy shoes.

Uncle Ed had to ride from one to another, and cheer and scold them on. The ladies ate their lunch riding along so as not to stop at all, and drank hot tea from thermos bottles, which seemed strange in that part of old China, where people had not changed for so many hundred years.

The afternoon came on, and the sun began to set; when he, their best friend, disappeared, it grew pitchy black and bitterly cold, but at last they heard a wild barking of dogs and saw some lights ahead, and heard friendly voices, so they knew that they had reached their village. The outside of the chapel was quite dark, but the inside was brightly lighted, and they were delighted to hobble in, for they were so stiff with the cold and long ride they could hardly stand. They soon had a table set with bread and butter and hot tea; it was set on a table which was used for a pulpit the next day. If ever you

come to China you will be surprised how many uses one article of furniture can have. I was born here, so I am never surprised at all.

The coolies brought in the bedding, and Uncle Ed helped the ladies to put up their little folding beds, and my, how glad they were to snuggle under the warm blankets and go to sleep.

Before they were up in the morning the people were thumping at the door, and trying to peep through the cracks, so that they had to hurry their dressing, and finally they were led by their kind host, with half the village following, to his house for breakfast.

Mother said it was a strange meal to a foreigner, but interesting, because everything they gave them came right from the farm. The brothers of the fat slices of pork they ate, were nosing about the door; at the same time, her elbow hit the basket from which the boiled rice had been taken; the little salt fish had some years back been caught in the puddle outside the door, and the turnips, cabbage and garlic could be easily traced to the muddy fields. The kindness and politeness of their cordial hosts made it a feast to be long remembered. Before they finished the little chapel was packed and people were fighting to get in. The mud was so deep between the house and the chapel mother's rubbers came off twenty times, and at last an old lady lent

her her crooked stick and another clutched her elbow and pulled her out of the mud.

There were so many women present Uncle Ed gave the chapel up to them and they filled it. They were all so eager in telling each other how anxious they were to hear all about "the Doctrine" the ladies could hardly be heard. The Chinese women, until they have been taught, have no idea how to behave in a foreigner's church. A few weeks ago in our own beautiful church in Hwai Yuan, Mother and Aunt Margaret were trying to keep fifty or sixty women quiet through the service, when, just before the benediction, an old lady popped up, and shrieked at the top of her lungs to her son who was away in the other side of the church, "Come on home, it's time for dinner. I'm going now." Mother tried to pull her down by the coat tails when she saw what was going to happen, but of course it was just too late. You can see if this happens in the city church, where the foreigners have been some time, how lively it might be in a green country chapel. They sang hymns, and by that means made the women listen, and then explained what the hymns meant. Reu Ku Niang talked, and so did Mother, till they became too hoarse and tired to even croak; then they told them Dr. Agnes would see any who were ill, in the corner of the chapel. Mother said they had such funny diseases. One woman was empty, all the time, and she pointed from her mouth to her

shoes; another woman was dry, particularly in the throat, and lots of other strange things.

Finally, they were told they must go to dinner, which was exactly like breakfast only Aunt Agnes had a donkey at her elbow. The afternoon service was the same as the morning and Aunt Agnes again looked after the poor sick ones. The supper, mother said, was exactly as remarkable as the dinner and breakfast. After supper the neighbors came in and asked if they couldn't sing hymns together, and the foreigners and Chinese sat for an hour or two singing. I am a little girl and not very wise, but it does seem lovely to me that though our ways and our languages are so different, we have the same loving Father in Heaven, so we can't be so different, after all.

When the singing was over the women still gathered for more medicine. Aunt Agnes treated them all, one after another, and then put up her chest. But still another woman had a sickness, when she awoke in the morning her arm was often numb. Couldn't she have something? Poor Aunt Agnes was dreadfully tired, so Mother said, "Let me give her something." She took an old biscuit box and put the rest of their alcohol in it, and told her to rub it on when she felt the trouble in her arm. So finally the ladies were allowed to go to sleep. The next morning the ride home was much easier because the snow was dry, and I guess from

what my mother said, her heart just ran ahead of the chairs all the way, she was so eager to reach us children.

Now I have told you the trip as nearly as I could remember it as Mother told us. I must tell you one thing that, of course, she would not tell, but I know it must have happened,—it always happens everywhere. That is how she won the love of those women, and how they clung to her. I don't believe they will have any more trouble with the heathen women in that village since they have seen my mother. I must tell you one more story about a woman here, and then I will stop, for this seems awfully long.

One day my mother had been talking to a poor old woman about the way to Jesus and about Heaven; how the door stood open to all who would enter. The poor old woman suddenly clasped my mother's hand and said, "Er Si Mu, I do not know about Heaven, but I know you, and I want to be with you and go where you go."

CHAPTER IV

Through the Magic Gates of a Yamen

YESTERDAY was a most remarkable day; when I tell you about it I guess you'll think so too. If you were my English friends you would exclaim, "Only fancy," and would not guess at all.

It was St. Valentine's Day. Of course the Chinese never heard of such a person and it was impossible to buy a single valentine. My mother had saved up all last year's valentines; they were a pretty ragged set, and we tried to play they were bright and new, but as some one said, "It was a most awful stretch to the imagination," mine nearly cracked in doing it. I had to pretend I had a fairy in my heart to last me all the year, to keep from crying. I think my mother is perfectly fine in making games out of nothing. I remember once she gave Billy a badge, when he was a very little boy, for not crying one whimper all day, and he wore it around as proud as a peacock.

Yesterday she thought of such splendid new fairy games to make the day seem different. After awhile she was called away and Jimmy, who is never quiet, chose that time to throw a ball through the nursery window and then stuck his head through after it, to see how much damage he had done on the side where the ball struck. You will laugh at that, but it isn't as funny as it sounds, for it is still Chinese New Year, which means nothing to you, but here in China it will be ten days before we can find a man who will mend it. As the weather is very cold, I suppose we will have to take the fresh-air cure.

When we had quieted down a little after Jimmy's mishap, Mother came in, her hand just full of American mail, and loads of—I wonder if you could guess what?—valentines! Our dear grandmother, who never forgets any holiday, had sent them. We just shouted and chortled in our joy. Mother divided them up, and then she gave each two or three, and we went out in turn, but quite secretly, and when no one was looking came back, and knocked on the front door, and when we heard footsteps coming we ran away, leaving a valentine marked plainly for each of the others on the door step. It was such fun, and we played at it until nearly dinner time. Then came another lovely surprise. Mother took me aside and told me because it was Valentine's Day she was going to take me to a feast at

the Yamen. I danced right up and down when I heard that good news, for I dearly love to go with Mother, but somehow she hardly ever takes me there. We had to begin to dress right off, for there was no telling when the feast would begin. The polite way in China is for the lady of the feast to send a Yamen runner to her guests every hour or two to say the feast is ready, and when she sends about the third time then you go. Mother says she has to give up almost the whole day to a feast, and I don't think she enjoys giving so much time, but she likes to be friendly with the women. Mother put on her best lavender Chinese coat, with some pretty flowers in her soft brown hair, and she did look so sweet. If you asked me what flower I thought of when I thought of my mother I should say violets; she loves them so, and always wears violet or lavender or lilac when she can. My aunties in America laugh and say that no matter what color she expects to buy when she goes shopping for a gown—she always comes back with some shade of violet.

I wore my very best white dress that came for Christmas, and I had my hair curled and felt so stiff and starched. I thought they never would send the servant the last time. I was dreadfully hungry; besides, Billy and Jimmy were playing a fascinating game of making mud marbles in the back yard and

I was crazy to join them, but of course I couldn't in my best dress.

At last we started. I was in the same sedan chair with mother. The chair looked very gay with its bright tassels and curtains; and as we were carried through the streets all the neighbors ran out of their courts and peered in at the little windows to see who was riding in such state; they would turn to each other and say, "The foreign ladies are going to the Yamen today," and then they would scream it to some neighbor in a back court who could not come out to see for herself; so altogether we made quite a stir. I really couldn't help feeling important.

Very soon we came to the great gates of the Yamen and our bearers put our chairs down, and we sent our large red calling card in to the Tai Tai to tell of our arrival. While we waited the usual Chinese crowd gathered around our chair, and again the men leaned way over and looked into the chair to see who we were and what we had on. After waiting, it seemed to me a very long time, the gates were thrown open and we were carried through the men's court to the gates before the women's part of the Yamen. These gates too were thrown wide—doesn't that sound like Cinderella?—and we were carried up the open court to the steps in front of the guest-room. I always love the way we go into the Yamen, it seems exactly the same as the fairy stories and Arabian

Nights, with all the form and the swinging back of doors and bowing menials. If only the menials weren't so ragged and dirty, and the Yamen so bare and dusty. When I try to pretend that the houses are tiled with gold and the rooms are decked in fine tapestry instead of cobwebs I have to shut my eyes to do it. Now I must hurry, for all this time I have been talking the Tai Tai had been standing waiting for us to descend from our gilded chariots—our moth-eaten sedan chairs, truly; our flunkies—the chair coolies—stood aside while the Tai Tai's amah hurried out to help us alight and walk to where the head Tai Tai stood bowing and smiling and firmly shaking her own hands. You must remember it was very necessary for us to have the amah help us walk, for even my feet were supposed to be bound and, of course, that makes it very hard for us to move. Finally we reached the bowing mandariness and Mother took her glasses off her nose in order to be very polite, and bowed and I bowed and we all murmured under our breath that she was doing us too much honor. At last it seemed to strike our hostess that it was time to lead us in. She had on a beautiful embroidered coat and I heard one of the foreign ladies murmur in English behind me, "What a gorgeous evening coat!"

There were two or three Chinese ladies in the guest-room, to whom my mother had to begin the same old polite remarks, while

the other foreign ladies did the same. Then all the foreign ladies gave back their invitations to the feast, with more bows and politeness. After this came the great ceremony of getting seated. My mother was the guest of honor and must take the highest place. My mother knew this was the case, and the Tai Tai knew that my mother knew that this was the polite thing to do, and all the Chinese ladies and the foreign ladies knew the custom; yet they had to protest and beg and beseech and refuse and resist and the like—as my Latin rules put it—until they were all tired out. In the end my mother sank exhausted where she had known she was to be all the time, the rest of the guests followed and we were soon all seated and glad of the hot tea to freshen up our tired manners. I had a chance to peep around while the others were talking, and I must confess that one needed an unusually strong magical wand to turn this room into a fairy palace. The floors were rough stone, later we found in the bedrooms there were bare boards; there were no ceilings but thatched roofs, the one window in each room had one small pane of glass, the rest were pasted up with paper. In the inner room to which we were invited after we had finished with the tea, were several trunks piled up in a corner; and in another was a large carved bedstead with curtains of light blue calico—the whole place really needed Aladdin very badly indeed. Yet the ladies' gowns

were most beautiful, all satin and embroidery.

While we were still in the first room, "sipping our Bohea" like "Prince Finnikin and his Mamma," my mother started the polite conversation. She turned to the first Tai Tai and asked to know "her most honorable name." It seemed her "very unworthy name" was "Wang"; then she turned to the next lady, her name also was "Wang," and still another was called "Wang" too. You can see by this there are plenty of Wangs in China.

Then the amah, after trying a water pipe, handed it to Mother. All the Chinese ladies were smoking, but of course Mother refused, as did the rest of the foreigners. So the Tai Tai whispered to the amah and away she ran and brought back a plate on which were laid a box of matches and some of the very largest cigars I ever saw. They refused, without a smile, but I had to think of something very sad to keep from laughing right out loud, but I think it showed how truly polite they were.

Then my mother tried to make more conversation; she remembered she had heard one of the brothers had been married lately, so she said in her politest manner, "May I ask which of you ladies is the bride?" They all looked at each other. "What does she say?" they asked. She tried again. Still they looked blank. At a last attempt one of the amahs understood and translated to

the ladies. We saw in a minute, from their surprise, it was a break and one of the ladies answered, "She is not here." When they took us into the other room we knew why they had been so surprised, for there in one corner stood the bride bowing very low.

You must remember that going from one room to another was not as simple as it sounds, for each time we had to go through the same polite ceremonies as we did when we were first seated, and as each lady had an amah or two to support her swaying footsteps, it was a complicated affair. The bride was very gay in her scarlet coat and skirt, her face powdered white, her eyebrows and hair blackened, with red cheeks and lips, and so many queer rings and bracelets; but I don't think she looked really pretty. Again we had to drink tea with the bride, and ask more polite questions, at least the Chinese call them polite; their ideas are different from ours, but they are the most polite people in the world.

We all sipped tea as noisily as possible so that our hostesses should understand we considered it delicious. Then once again the chief Tai Tai asked us to go into another room. It was the first room we had seen, but while we were away admiring the little bride a great change had been wrought.

The table had been moved into the middle of the room and at each place was a pair of ivory and silver chop sticks. Along the middle of the table were laid little plates,

each having a pile of Chinese dainties; turnips cut into pretty shapes, slices of pear, pomegranate, buried eggs, cold fat ham, dates, bits of orange, and many other things. Near the seat of honor stood a man with a little metal bowl on a tray; the great Tai Tai, steadying herself by the back of the chairs, made her way around the table until she came near the highest seat, then she took the bowl of wine from the tray and, holding it in both hands, made a pretty bow to my mother, and asked her to be seated. She did this to the foreign ladies, in turn, then the Chinese ladies slipped into their places and the feast began.

It would take me nearly all winter, I believe, if I told you all we had to eat, and you probably would never go to a Chinese feast if I did, and then you would miss lots of fun and many good things.

We had course after course, some like the "little girl with the little curl," very good, —others horrid. Everything was either very oily or very sweet, and all boiling hot.

My mother says she can eat the shark's fins with a smile, worry down the black sea slugs and the buried eggs, but the worst of all is to think up conversation through the many unending courses. Chinese ladies are not allowed to go outside their houses except in sedan chairs; they can not read, and they spend their days sewing, quarreling, and smoking. My hair was the subject for two or three courses,—how beautiful it was, and

what a lovely skin I had, and my eyes were as blue as the sky , and I spoke Chinese better than the ladies did themselves. I saw my mother look very uneasy and try and talk about American children and how they were taught to obey. I knew she didn't like me to hear all the compliments, that's one reason she so seldom takes me to the Yamen —but of course I had sense enough to know they did not really mean it, and were only being polite. Towards the end of the feast they began to talk about the famine that was growing very bad around us, and one of the ladies said that two or three prisoners died of hunger every day. The prison was under the same roof as the Yamen, and my mother said, when she heard that, the feast fairly choked her, and she felt she must get away. You see, the government gives each prisoner a certain number of cash for food. It would be enough to keep the prisoners alive, but the officials put most of the money into their own pockets. Well, at last, the servant passed around a tin basin full of warm water with a greyish rag floating in it, each guest being supposed to bury their face in the rag to remove all traces of the meal. I noticed the foreign ladies touched it pretty gingerly, and that marked the end of the feast.

As usually, Mother was surrounded by the ladies who were loath to let her go, and begged her eagerly to come again,—they seemed to feel she had something they need-

ed though thy couldn't tell at all what it was.

As we climbed into our sedan chairs the moon poured over the court, the darkness hid all the dirt and barrenness, and the moonlight made the big carved gates look so splendid, I did not have to pretend at all. It is strange to me how my mother interests all the Chinese, rich and poor. While I have been writing this story about the feast, I heard her talking to one of the poor women who has come in from the country to study about the Doctrine. Mother says she would get on much faster, but the poor old soul is very deaf. Mother fairly roared into her ears the story of the Prodigal Son. When she had finished the woman turned to her niece, who was standing by, and said, with a placid smile, "I can't understand her, you know I'm a little deaf," and the niece explained to my mother, "You'll have to talk as though you were quarreling with her." Just the same, the old lady seems to have gathered a good deal more from my mother's teaching than a great many brighter Christians in America, for she loves to go to church, and says, "I can't hear the prayers, and the sermon, and I can't sing the hymns—but I can sit awhile before the Lord."

CHAPTER V

The Exciting Voyage of a Houseboat

BILLY, Jimmy and I feel a good deal like cannibals or graveyards this afternoon. I suppose you wonder why, so I will hurry to tell you.

When we came back from our summer vacation, Tain Si Fu, our cook, gave us six pigeons; three to us children for pets, and three to Daddy and Mother for the table; but they were all put in one small pigeon house. We children grew very fond of them, feeding them faithfully with corn and other things until they were as plump as partridges. At last today Mother felt we must eat the three that Tain Si Fu had given her and Daddy, or he would be hurt. Of course we all hated to lose our pets and when I came to the table and saw them looking so different from the proud pigeons that used to strut about the yard and stick out their breasts in such a conceited way, and who used to fly down so quickly when we brought them their dinner, I

didn't know whether to laugh or to cry—still we all wanted to taste. Jimmy took the first bite very doubtfully, smacked his lips, and said, with a sad, sweet smile, "How comfy does other pigeons are, in dere little house when dey sit down, now dese ones are gone."

That comforted us so much and the pigeons were so delicious we all ate a great deal, but after dinner when I went out and saw only three pigeons it made me feel very solemn, and I decided to write a story this afternoon, and perhaps I would forget about being a cannibal.

Hwai Yuan I like, and Kuling I like, but it's awful on the plains between except at Mrs. Molland's house, that seems like a kind of place to cuddle down in.

Every summer we go to the mountains because it is too hot for children and ladies in Hwai Yuan, but it means such a trip. Sometimes three or four weeks when we go by houseboat; ten days or more if we go by sedan chair, and that is dreadfully hard traveling, putting up at night in the stuffy, dirty Chinese inns and being carried all day long on the shoulders of quarreling coolies. When we reach home we are just worn out. Mother hates the houseboat even worse, though it is much easier, because it was on the first houseboat trip that our little Harry was taken so ill, and she always is afraid what may happen. Soon we hope to have a railroad and then it will be fine taking

only a day or two; it will make us feel so civilized.

This fall there were so many people and such a crowd of boxes we had to go by houseboat. It took three boats to carry us all. When I tell you there were three hundred boxes, I think you will be surprised. Among the things were a piano, a church organ, coal, a pulpit, and eighteen beds; all our winter stores, potatoes, and groceries; all Auntie Jeanie's things from home, a violin and housekeeping utensils for some of the others, and a lot of things I can't remember.

I wish I could draw you a picture of a houseboat. You probably would think it a great lark to travel on one the first trip, even to the living on fricassée chicken for three or four weeks running; but to do it twice a year grows very tiresome. In the bow of the boat is the front deck, of course, under which the boatmen sleep. They put down the planks every night, and why they aren't smothered before morning we have never been able to discover; for not a sign of a window do they have, and all the air the three or four men get sifts through the cracks. They always bob up serenely next day, so I don't believe we need as much air as the doctors say we do.

Behind the deck comes a little room where they do the cooking; you have to walk through this to get to the living-room, dining-room, dressing-room, sleeping-room, all combined. Again behind that is another

room, and beyond that again are quarters for the boatman's family.

On this trip there were Aunt Peggie, Aunt Agnes and Auntie Jeanie, beside Daddy, Mother and we four children. You will understand if I quote the poem we learned in the Reader, "We were crowded in the cabin." We had beds on every spot and box where a bed could be put, and some places where they couldn't. In the day time the bedding had to be folded and put away so we could use the spots and boxes as chairs. As Mother complained, "It made getting dressed and the room ready for breakfast, very complicated."

I must hasten to explain that our trip was up the Grand Canal, on which the current was terribly swift on account of the floods, through the lakes, and up the Hwai River. The first part of the way we were tugged by a launch, the rest of the way we sailed when we had a following wind, which we seldom had, and were towed when the wind failed or was ahead. That, as you can easily imagine, was slow work, but in China time and tide wait for everybody.

Well, it took Daddy even longer to get the boats loaded than I have taken to describe it, and in the meantime we stayed with friends at Yang Chow. At length, however, every box, piece of coal and potato were on board, the boat tied to the launch, and they steamed along the canal to pick us up at Yang Chow.

We started off gay and happy as you please, amid the usual Chinese din of yells and jeers, firecrackers and cackling hens, while we stood and waved good-bye until our friends disappeared behind a bend in the river.

It took a good many hours to get our bags and bundles stowed away, for the boat had been pressed down and running over before, and with all the added people and bedding it was as good as a puzzle picture to get things "put and stay put," as some one wisely remarked.

We children went out on deck to be out of the way and watch the chickens, for in China one carries all the chickens one expects to eat, in coops, along with one. The idea is to feed them up in the hope they will grow fat and tender, but as far as I can remember, it was always a vain hope.

We watched the shores with the mud villages, and the dirty pigs, dogs and ragged children, and the barges full of country people and all their worldly belongings that were fleeing south away from the famine. All the world seemed under water except the banks of the canal and a few farmhouses here and there that stood above the flood mark. Then we grew tired and began to watch the boat people. The man who owns the boat always lives on it with his whole family; it may be a large one, in fact, it always is. We children enjoy

watching them cook their food, and burn their incense, though my mother hates to have us hear them swear and quarrel.

Once when we were on a boat the man who owned it was ill, and he thought he was going to die, so he took his coffin along with him. He thought it would be "inconvenient" to die on the boat, so he asked us to wait over a day and see what happened.

That evening his old aunt walked around the boat calling in the most weird voice for his soul to come back; it made my back bone creep. Then one of the sons went out into the fields and he was supposed to be the soul, and he called in a still more frightening voice, "Coming, coming." It just made me shiver and hold my mother's hand. I wonder how the sick man felt; however, he wasn't so very ill and we went on the next day.

By the time we had grown tired of watching the sailors and the old father of them all burning his joss sticks before their evening offering of rice, Mother called us in to supper. We perched on boxes and chairs and beds, at all sorts of angles, and ate our first wings and drumsticks of the daily chicken amid shouts of laughter. Auntie Jeanie, Mother and Daddy can always see the funny side of the most uncomfortable happenings, so they often turn mishaps that other people would talk about with long faces for days, into picnic parties.

It took a very long time to settle into bed

that night, though we started right after supper, for there seemed not a single place to put anything, and in the dim light of candles and lanterns, things slipped behind loose boards, or between boxes into the most unlikely places.

Billy and I couldn't help thinking what fun it would be if the organ, piano and violin should begin to play in the middle of the night, but we all drew the line at having the pulpit begin to preach. However, we had a very different kind of music! As one by one we dropped to sleep, the last thing we heard was the rushing of the water on our bows, and the distant barking of dogs on the bank, as we swung swiftly along, towed by the launch.

Suddenly, about two o'clock there was a crash, and we started up in bed, at the frightened yells of the boat people. There was running over our heads, calls to and from the distant launch, our boat gave a shake and tremble, and it seemed as if we must go over. We had struck a rock, and the launch threw off the tow rope. Our boat stood still a minute and then was carried away by the terribly swift current. The Grand Canal is not the quiet, peaceful, gentle water the canals in America are. It is quite wide in places, and after the high rains the water flows as fast as a river. We were all terribly surprised and frightened, but, as usual, Daddie and Mother quieted our fears. Daddy told us to dress quickly, and

Mother, very calm, though her voice shook a little when she spoke, found our lost stockings and shoes, and helped us bundle up warm. You can imagine the hubbub, all those people having to find their things in the dim light in those crowded cabins. The sailors had to come in, and found two feet of water under the floor, and it looked pretty serious. In a good deal shorter time than you would think possible, we were dressed and ready for the worst or best, for we did not know at what moment we would sink. The water looked awfully cold and cruel, and the night was so very dark; the only comfort was the lights of the launch in the distance, and the touch of my dear mother's hand.

When things seemed very bad indeed the sailors, who had by this time gotten their poles and oars out, gave a shout, and by much poling, rowing and yelling, pushed us up on the bank.

Then, of course, they had to stop the hole in our hold, and finally, after a long time, they patched it up so a tug could tow us to the next city, where it could be properly mended. You can easily understand without much explaining that we could not exactly call that a peaceful night's sleep. The next morning, after they had pulled their courage together, the family started in to see what damage had been done by the water in the hold. As the grown people said, "It didn't exactly help the burning

powers of the coal, and the flavor of potaties to have them soaked, but it was still harder on the books, the linen, and the violin." However, the organ and the piano were untouched and only the violin case damaged. We spread the books and linen out to dry so that they would not mildew, and the outside of the boat looked like "rag fair"—whatever that may be; but no one cares for looks in the middle of China, where whatever a foreigner does is considered half crazy any way.

You are probably saying that this accident on the houseboat was a very unusual thing, and if I wasn't so anxious to go and play I would tell you some more about our different trips, then perhaps you would understand why my mother dreaded them so. How they are almost always dangerous on account of river pirates; how sometimes the boats have been filled with rats so that they ran over us at night; how we have to drink the canal water into which everything is thrown. That is why dear little Harry didn't have any chance when he was ill. Then there is always danger from riots at unfriendly villages where the boats tie up at night; and last but not least, we have to go through the locks where there is always great danger of the rotten Chinese ropes breaking and the boat being upset in the swift rapids. People have been drowned there before now.

I think my mother is very brave to go through all these dangers twice a year for us children, for, of course, she is never frightened about herself. She never thinks of herself at all. I really think she is one of the bravest people in the world. Why, when Uncle Sam's house burned down, the women and children were sent to Aunt Rose's house for safety, but my mother stayed behind and directed the Chinese coolies where to throw the buckets of water. The firemen took their orders, without a protest, from a despised foreign woman, though I don't believe any one, in their heart of hearts, ever despised my mother.

Well, of course you can guess from my writing this that our last houseboat journey ended in safety. You could never understand, unless you had taken the journey, with an organ, a violin, a pulpit, eighteen beds, fricassee chickens, beside women and children, how perfectly delighted we were when we sailed around the last curve of the Hwai River, and old West Mountain came into view. It looked awfully pretty that bright October morning, with the queer Chinese sails on the winding river, with East and West mountains at the back of the picture and at the foot, our hospital and church spire in the dear little town of Hwai Yuan.

When I saw the Chinese women coming forward to greet my mother and welcome

her home, I knew she felt it was worth the hard trip, and that she was so glad she had the joy of being a foreign missionary.

CHAPTER VI

"In That Beautiful Land"

July, 1914

HERE we are again in dear old Kuling. We are the same children, Nancy, Billy, Jimmy and Baby Gwen, only we are quite a good deal bigger; the bungalow is the same, and the little bridge across our brook, and the mountains with their queer Chinese shapes; and our good, kind friends are as lovely as ever. None of these things or people have changed at all, yet it seems so different, so strange and queer and very empty. Often in my play I stop and listen, thinking I hear a voice calling, "Nancy, Nancy dear," and suddenly I remember that that can not be, for her voice never calls me now. I turn again and try to play, but the play spirit is gone away, for I no longer have a loving Mother into whose ear I can whisper all about the make-believe games, one who knows what I mean without the long explaining that most grown-up people need.

You see, it came about in this way. After the terrible famine in China, all the mis-

sionaries were worn out—Uncle Sam and Uncle Bois were ill with fever and no one thought they would ever get well. My Daddy helped to nurse them and when they began to be better, he grew worse and worse until the doctors got together and sent us home to America. My mother was just wonderful, she took care of Daddie and was so bright and cheery even when she was worried half to death about him.

When we reached home Daddy went to one grandmother's and we children to the other's, while mother went back and forth between. That was pretty hard, because when she was in one place she was wondering what was happening in the other, but she never told how she felt except once, when she said to a friend that when she was going to the children she "just wanted to get out and push the train." How we would watch for her coming up the long hill from the railroad station, and rush to the door to be the first to kiss her, and little Gwen would dance around shouting, "Muddie," "Muddie," and Mother would exclaim over and over again, "Oh, you precious children, you precious children."

Then began a joyful time, for Daddy got better, and we could be all together in the mountains; those were the happiest days we ever had anywhere. Mother was so bright and funny, and dear and good, her mind was so relieved about Daddy she could scarcely keep from laughing all the time, her soft

eyes had such a loving light in them, and when she made a joke she just twinkled all over.

We came back to Pen-y-Craig in the fall, and suddenly they said our precious mother was ill, so we must keep very still. We simply stole around the house, and tried to be just as quiet as good children could be, talking in whispers. One or two days we spent with friends, and we did not realize then, she was very ill; but oh! so soon they told us our darling Mother had gone to be with Jesus. It must be very beautiful there, still I can't help feeling she must have hated to leave her little children and dear Daddy.

The day she was put to rest was very rainy, but as they carried her softly out and laid her gently down in a bed of beautiful purple and white asters, the setting sun suddenly filled the valleys and covered the mountains, and in the end, touched her resting-place with a glorious golden light. Then our minister repeated the words, "The pilgrim they laid in a large upper chamber, whose window opened toward the rising sun, the name of the chamber was peace, where she slept till break of day." I like to think of her sleeping on that hilltop with the mountains she loved around her, and her dear home nestled below her. She seems the guardian angel of it and the whole town; and not alone of them but of distant China too; for in the tall tower of our beautiful church above "the city that those who are

far away love," my mother's friends have placed a clock and bell, that when the bell chimes out the hours foreigners and Chinese alike may think tenderly of one who loved them all so dearly and spent her life for them.

On the happy Sunday morning when the bell rings over the town and echoes back from the hills, calling us to service, I whisper in my heart, "My mother is still calling us as she used to do, to leave our work and come to pray to Him who gladly died for us." But most of all I love to think of her watching near to us children when we play, and when we are tired and going to bed, I can almost feel her soft hand smoothing my hair and pressing gently on my eyelids to make me go to sleep—always if I am naughty I see her dear brown eyes looking at me sadly.

It is very hard for a little girl to understand exactly why God wanted her when we needed her so very badly, but this thought often comforts me. You know how my mother loved the poor stupid Chinese women and how many she helped and taught to love Jesus. Now our Heavenly Father knew they were stupid and poor: He realized that when they came to Heaven they would be lonely, frightened, and strange, it would be so different in that beautiful place from their dirty straw huts, and muddy courtyards and streets. I think He has taken my mother, whom they trusted so deeply, to greet them and make Heaven homelike to them, for

surely they never could feel clumsy nor homesick nor shy after they had seen her.

I can just see her stand at that beautiful gate, with Harry, and Cousin Tommy at her side waiting patiently as she always used to do to welcome those timid Chinese women. She would run forward, her hands outstretched and her face all shining with love and joy, eager to show them how much more beautiful this new country was than they ever could have dreamed; and at last they will understand what she had meant when she told them in poor famine-stricken China that they should never be hungry any more nor thirsty, nor sick, and best of all, she will lead them to the King in all His wonderful beauty—and to the loving Shepherd who had come to earth to seek them when they were lost.

Can you see why that country does not seem very far off or strange to us children, with our precious mother there?

The Song of the Women

How shall she know the worship we would do her!
The walls are high, and she is very far.
How shall the women's message reach unto her
Above the tumult of the packed bazaar?
Free wind of March against the lattice blowing,
Bear thou our thanks, lest she depart unknowing.

Go forth across the fields we may not roam in;
Go forth beyond the trees that rim the city,
To whatsoe'er fair place she hath her home in,
Who dowered us with wealth of love and pity;
Out of our shadow pass and seek her, singing,
"I have no gifts but love alone for bringing."

Say that we be a feeble folk who greet her,
But old in grief, and very wise in tears;
Say that we, being desolate, entreat her
That she forget us not in after years;
For we have seen the light, and it were grievous
To dim that dawning if our lady leave us.

By life that ebbed with none to stanch the falling,
By love's sad harvest garnered in the spring,
When love in ignorance wept unavailing
O'er young buds dead before their blossoming;
By all the gray owl watched, the pale moon viewed,
In past grim years, declare our gratitude!

* * * *

Go forth, O wind, our message on thy wings,
And they shall hear thee pass and bid thee speed,—
In reed-roofed hut, or white-walled home of kings,—
Who have been helpen by her in their need,
All spring shall give thee fragrance, and the wheat
Shall be a tasselled floor cloth to thy feet.

Haste, for our hearts are with thee; take no rest,
Loud-voiced ambassador, from sea to sea.
Proclaim the blessing, manifold, confest,
Of those in darkness, by her hand set free;
Then very softly to her presence move,
And whisper, "Lady, lo, they know and love!"

RUDYARD KIPLING.

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